

GOVDOC

M3/B16  
m  
73/2

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 06588 647 3





BOSTON PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

Form No. 1374—5/75



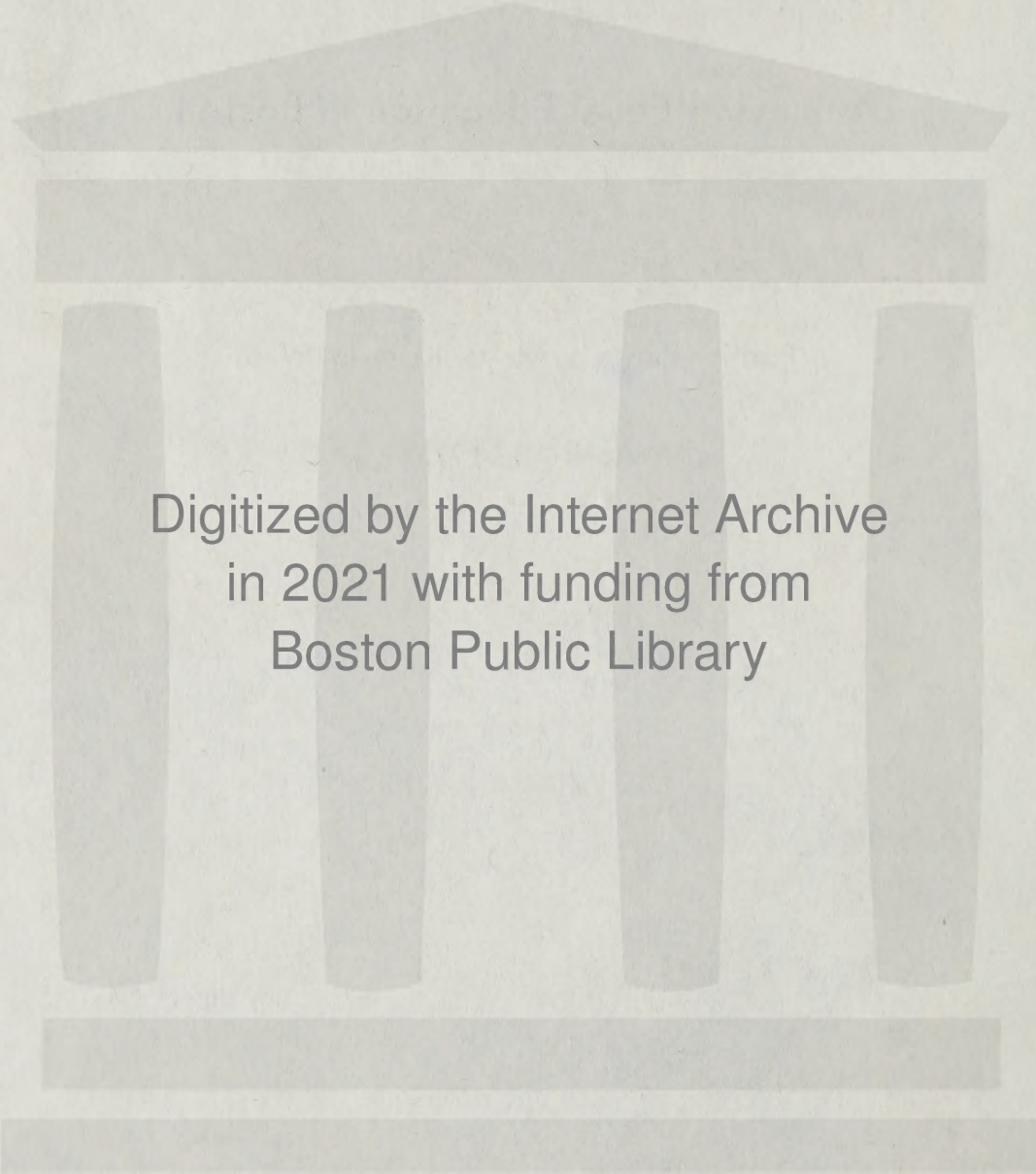


A  
M3/B16  
73/2

# Achieving Equal Education in Boston

A Position Paper by Mayor Kevin H. White

April 10, 1973



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2021 with funding from  
Boston Public Library

<https://archive.org/details/achievingequaled00bost>



Nineteen years ago the U.S. Supreme Court in Brown vs. Board of Education outlawed racially separate school systems. The Court's decision was aimed at state laws in the South which prohibited integrated education, and was based on the conviction that segregated schools denied black children the equal protection of the law guaranteed them by the 14th amendment to our Constitution. Although the Supreme Court has not yet ruled on a school segregation case brought against a Northern school board, lower courts have ordered integration in such cities as Detroit, Denver, and San Francisco, based on the 14th amendment principles enunciated in the Brown decision, and a similar case is pending against the Boston School Committee in the U.S. District Court.

I emphasize the 14th amendment at the outset in order to put the present furor over busing and the state's Racial Imbalance law in the proper perspective. Busing, by itself, is not really the issue. After all, over 30,000 students go to school by bus or subway everyday in this city. Of these approximately 2000 are bused especially to reduce racial imbalance. Another 1600 are bused to suburban schools under the Metco program. No one objects to this busing, for no child attends a school outside of his neighborhood against his parent's wishes. Thus, the issue isn't busing; it is whether the busing is mandatory or voluntary, and whether the destination is feared or desired.

Under state law it is the responsibility of School Committees to assign pupils to particular schools. In the Federal Court case before Judge Garrity, and in a parallel case brought by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, it has been alleged that the Boston School Committee has deliberately structured the school

system in such a way as to prevent black children from going to school with whites. The charge is that, rather than adopting attendance districts and enrollment policies which might reduce the degree of racial separation created by the housing patterns in this city, the School Committee has systematically taken steps to increase the segregation of blacks. Judge Ring in the H.E.W. case has already ruled that these charges are accurate. If his findings are upheld, the City will lose more than \$11 million in vitally needed Federal aid. And if Judge Garrity agrees, the result could be a sweeping court order affecting every school in the city.

The underlying question, therefore, isn't really busing or even the state's Racial Imbalance law. At issue is whether the Boston School Committee can satisfy the Federal courts that black children are being given the equal protection promised them under the Constitution. If the State Board of Education can demonstrate that the Boston School Committee can substantially increase the amount of racial integration in the schools without substantially increasing the distance children must travel, then the School Committee should redraw district lines accordingly. They should do this not only because it is required by state law, but in order to avoid far more disastrous consequences if they are found guilty by Judge Garrity.

It is critically important that we be clear about the differences between the State and Federal cases, for they can lead to very different results. The State's Racial Imbalance law, as interpreted in the Springfield case by the Supreme Judicial Court, specifically forbids massive forced busing. The court ruled in Springfield that no plan can compel children to attend schools well out of their own neighborhood simply to reduce racial imbalance, and Judge Sullivan



rejected the State Board's first plan for Boston on similar grounds. A plan ordered by a Federal court on 14th amendment grounds, however, could move children from one end of the city to the other in order to get the same black-white ratio in every school. It is this kind of busing that the School Committee is threatening to bring on by its refusal to develop a plan to ensure equal opportunity for all children.

A plan to provide equal educational opportunity in Boston must go well beyond the Racial Imbalance Law, however, for that law is seriously flawed. When the law was passed eight years ago, the conventional wisdom was that the best way to satisfy the concept of equal protection in education was to outlaw majority-black schools. Obviously the inequalities of opportunity in this society go well beyond our educational system. They are a reflection of segregated housing patterns, job discrimination, unequal access to health care, and all of the other consequences of the poverty cycle. One could argue that the inequality problem might better have been attacked by focusing first on fair housing or full employment goals, but the Supreme Court in the Brown decision put the burden directly on the schools. In the racial climate of the mid-60's -- after the passage of the landmark Civil Rights legislation and prior to the Watts, Detroit, and Newark explosions -- the black community seemed united in the belief that the approach represented by the Racial Imbalance law represented the best way to eliminate inequality. Consequently, those whites who were committed to the notion of equal rights and racial justice lined up behind the law and helped assure its passage.

In the eight years since the law's passage, however, the number of racially imbalanced schools in Boston has nearly doubled, hundreds

of thousands of dollars have been spent on litigation, the city has become increasingly polarized by the imbalance controversy, and most important of all, the law has distracted everyone's attention from the more fundamental problem, which is that schools in all parts of Boston are failing the children they are supposed to serve.

Although I was originally a strong supporter of the Racial Imbalance law and stood for its retention through two mayoral elections, I am now convinced that the Racial Imbalance law cannot and will not achieve the purpose for which it was designed. I want to be unmistakably clear, however, that in criticizing the Racial Imbalance law I am questioning the means that the legislature has chosen to pursue the goal of equal educational opportunity, not the goal itself. There must be no swerving from our commitment to equal opportunity, not only because the Constitution requires it, but because our sense of justice compels it. What is needed in the present situation is not cynical exploitation of people's legitimate fears and concerns, but a reasoned analysis of the shortcomings of the Imbalance law and the development of a better alternative for guaranteeing equal educational opportunity to all Boston School Children.

Before getting into my analysis and recommendations, however, let me briefly review the evolution of my own interest and involvement in school issues. When I first ran for Mayor in 1967, the busing issue was just as inflamed as it is today. The candidacy of my opponent was founded in large measure on her opposition to the Racial Imbalance law, and the differences between us on this issue were among the sharpest in the campaign. After my election I gave considerable thought to the question



of what role, if any, I should play in relation to the school system. By tradition and law, the School Department operates with virtually complete autonomy from the rest of city government, and the Boston School Committee has jealously guarded its prerogatives. The only ways in which the Mayor has any statutory authority over school matters are in his power to build new schools and to approve requests for budgetary increases. Consequently, I decided to focus my attention during the first term on improving the performance of those city departments which were clearly the Mayor's lawful responsibility, and to restrict my attention on educational matters to buildings and budget.

The physical needs of the school system were immediately obvious to even the most casual observer. In every neighborhood of the City parents, teachers, and students were pleading for modern buildings to replace the physically decaying and educationally obsolete structures in which most Boston students were housed. I therefore instructed the Public Facilities Department to launch one of the most ambitious school building programs ever undertaken in an American city. This program is ambitious not only in the number of schools to be constructed or renovated -- 20 will have been opened by next September, 25 by 1975 -- but also in their quality, for these schools are community centers as well, designed to house programs to serve all the people in a neighborhood and to be kept open 7 days a week, 12 months a year.

Aside from the massive building program and the annual budgetary review - a review, I should point out, which allowed the School Department budget to increase from \$56 million to \$105 million in four years - during my first two years as Mayor I had



little direct involvement with the school system. But when English High School erupted in 1970, and student disruptions and strikes spread across the City, I found that although I had no legal responsibility for the School Department, people looked to the Mayor's office for leadership. Consequently, I visited every high school in the city, talking with students, teachers, administrators, and parents in order to develop an understanding of the issues that precipitated the unrest and to develop solutions. Although my personal involvement diminished after the crisis period had passed, I had learned an important lesson: namely, that a big city Mayor is in fact involved with the schools, for the problems and failures of the schools can spill over into the streets and ignite at any time.

As my first term drew to a close and I began my campaign for reelection, the School Committee and the State Board of Education moved toward a critical showdown on the Racial Imbalance issue. These two bodies had been on a collision course since the Imbalance law was passed in 1965. By the summer of 1971 it was apparent that unless the School Committee made a serious attempt to develop a plan to end racial imbalance in the City's schools, the State Board would withhold all state aid to the City. This is not the place to review the events of that summer in any detail. Suffice it to say that in spite of my best efforts to intervene in order to bring about a settlement, the showdown came, and the State Board froze all aid to the City.

The freeze continued for 15 months. \$52 million in state aid was withheld, forcing the City to pay \$50,000 a month in interest and nearly precipitating a 6 week shutdown in all



city services -- police, fire, health, as well as schools. It was only through judicial intervention that the money was finally released and catastrophe averted, but again the point was brought home to me with great force: the problems and failures of the school system affect every other aspect of city life; and the lack of authority to solve these problems does not and should not absolve a Mayor of responsibility.

If one looks around the country at other big cities, it is clear that most mayors keep a very low profile on school issues. Given the number of controversies in other areas that mayors absolutely cannot sidestep, it is perhaps understandable that most would choose to stand out of the line of fire on such hot issues as busing and community control. Certainly the heavy political price that John Lindsay paid for his efforts on behalf of school decentralization in New York City would give pause to any mayor. But a year or so ago I came to the conclusion that, whatever the costs to my own political security, I could not in conscience walk away from the problems of the Boston schools. These problems are too critical to the social and economic health of the City for me to ignore. Rather than leap in with an ill-considered set of recommendations, however, I added a full-time educational assistant to my staff and asked him to take as much time as necessary to study the Boston schools and then recommend a course of action to me. For the last six months we have been studying the school problem in all of its complexity, weighing alternative responses, and most important, meeting with small groups of concerned parents throughout the City. The analysis and recommendations that follow are a result of that process.



They are offered not as a panacea, however, but rather as a means of shifting the focus of public discussion away from the narrow obsession with busing and onto more fundamental questions which have gotten lost in the present frenzy and uproar: namely, how can equal opportunity for all Boston children be assured? And what can be done to improve the quality of school in all of the City's neighborhoods?

Let me begin by describing what I believe to be the three fundamental flaws in the Racial Imbalance law: First, the law ignores the fact that the major inequalities in resources and opportunities lie between the City and its suburbs, not between one City neighborhood and another. This is not to deny that there are differences in opportunity within the City itself, but rather to emphasize that no section of the City can really stand comparison with our more advantaged suburbs. This is true whether one is measuring the equalized valuation behind each student (in Boston, \$15,290; in Brookline, \$55,556), the dollars spent per student (Boston, \$935; Brookline, \$1471), the achievement levels of the students, or the percentages of graduates going on to college (Boston, 25%; Brookline, 75%). It is a painful irony that the communities with the least needy and most advantaged children can with little effort spend heavily on education, while the communities with the greatest need cannot keep pace and must tax themselves to the limit. This obvious injustice cries out for remedy.

Second, a series of major educational studies conducted during the past eight years, most notably the government-



sponsored Coleman Report, have demonstrated two things:

(a) that the primary source of educational disadvantage is poverty, not skin color; and (b), that the most important determinant of a child's success in school, aside from the talent and background he brings from home, is the social and economic background of his classmates. Thus, suburban schools can not only spend more money with less effort than can city schools, but they contain a monopoly on the most important resource a school has to offer a disadvantaged child: namely, a majority of children from middle and upper income families. In a city in which there are not enough middle-income children to go around, implementing the Racial Imbalance law means in most instances mixing poor children of one color with poor children of another. This may have some social benefits, but we should not delude ourselves into believing that it will solve the educational problems of poor children of either color. The evidence on this point is beyond dispute: racial integration improves achievement levels only when it is accompanied by social and economic integration.

Third, the law discriminates unfairly against low income people of both races in its dependence upon mandatory rather than voluntary pupil assignment. I realize that school attendance districts in this country have traditionally been established by school boards, and that in neither the suburbs nor the city have individuals had the right to select their children's school. It is demonstrably true, however, that those with money exercise far greater choice about the schools their

children will attend than do those without money. The Newton or Wellesley resident has in many cases chosen his neighborhood largely because of what he knows about the local schools, and because his income level allows him that choice. Those with lower incomes might prefer the Newton schools, but income (and, in many cases, skin color) keeps them trapped in the City. I am convinced that behind much of the opposition to busing lies the unarticulated feeling on the part of many people of limited means that there is something inherently unfair in a system that gives people with money choices about schooling that others are denied.

My neighborhood visits have persuaded me that the opposition to mandatory busing is by no means limited to whites. There are many blacks who believe strongly in the importance of working to strengthen the institutions in their own neighborhood in order to make them more responsive to community needs. They recognize that the schools in other parts of the City leave much to be desired, and are just as resistant to seeing their children bused out of their neighborhood as the most vocal whites. In Atlanta recently it was black parents who led the opposition to massive busing and persuaded their NAACP lawyers to reduce from 18,000 to 2,000 the number of children to be bused under a court-ordered integration plan. In his comment on the Atlanta case, Roy Wilkins, the national NAACP head, asserted that "our general position has been that there is no sacrifice of racial pride or loss of education if blacks go to school



with blacks;" and that "with an improvement in education and a program that leads to meaningful equalization of the educational process, black children will not suffer by attending an all-black school."

If we are serious, then, about providing equality of educational opportunity, we must move beyond the terms of the Racial Imbalance law to an educational system in which the burden of school finance is shared equally throughout the metropolitan area, and in which poor people have the same access to quality public education as do rich people. In order to achieve a school system characterized by equal access to quality education, action is required by five parties -- the Legislature, the State Board of Education, the local colleges and universities, the Boston City Council, and the City's voters.

The Legislature must take action on three fronts. First, the recent failure of the Supreme Court to declare the property tax unconstitutional as the basic means of financing public education makes it all the more imperative that the legislature take decisive action to end the injustice of having the quality of a youngster's education depend upon the wealth of his community. The reform of school finance, of course, is tied to the larger problem of finding a more equitable alternative to the local property tax, a problem unlikely to be solved in this session. Meanwhile, however, the Legislature should pass House bill 1876, filed by Representative Michael Daly, which alters the present formula for distributing state aid so as to begin reducing the gap between rich districts and poor ones. The immediate impact would be to provide an additional \$4 million for Boston, but beyond that

the bill represents a significant first step toward true state equalization of financing.

Second, just as the financial burden of education should be shared equally throughout the metropolitan area, so it should be that a family's choice of schools not be limited to what is available in his own neighborhood or district. Children from poor families throughout the city should be guaranteed access to schools in middle-income neighborhoods, but the choice should rest with the family. School construction should be planned and financed on a metropolitan basis in order to locate new schools where the demand is greatest. Until we reach the point where suburbs are required to make available seats for all poor children who wish them, however, it is critical that the Legislature provide full funding for METCO. There are currently 1600 students enrolled in the program, and another 1000 on the waiting list. The problem is that the Governor has not submitted an adequate appropriation. The Legislature must pass an appropriation large enough to ensure that no child who wishes to participate in METCO is denied the opportunity.

Third, before poor parents can have a real choice between including their children in a METCO program or keeping them in the neighborhood school, they must be assured that the teachers, course offerings, curriculum materials, and facilities in their neighborhood schools are at least equal in quality and quantity to those anywhere else in the region. House bill 4117, sponsored by the Legislature's Black Caucus, takes a significant first step in that direction by guaranteeing an equal distribution of resources and opportunities in all schools in the city. Under this bill Parent Councils would be created to monitor the educational performance in every school, and the state would be required to provide increased aid to any school whose achievement level falls substantially below the state average. In extreme cases a Parent Council could request the State to take over the operation of a failing school.



By passing House bills 1876 and 4117, and by providing full funding for METCO, the legislature would be extending to poor parents a genuine choice between having their children bused to a middle-income school or having an opportunity to influence the quality of their neighborhood school, as well as providing additional financial aid to all city schools.

But legislation by itself is not enough. Affirmative steps must be taken within the City to maximize the possibility of natural integration. I mentioned earlier that the Public Facilities Department was in the middle of a major school building and renovation program. Early in the development of this program we made the decision to locate new schools wherever possible in areas where there seemed the best chance of achieving a stable racial mix. This decision was made partly in order to qualify these schools for 65% state construction aid rather than the normal 40%, but even without this bonus we believe this strategy makes sense. I am now proposing that the next phase of the City's building program capitalize wherever possible on the City's economic diversity. This is difficult, for there are not enough middle-income youngsters to go around, but it is critically important that all possible steps be taken to hold middle-income families in the city. I recently announced plans for the construction of a new high school in West Roxbury, and the Public Facilities Department is currently investigating possible sites for a second new high school in Roslindale or Hyde Park whose present facilities are desperately in need of modernization. These new schools will be

planned with a large enough capacity to ensure that approximately a quarter of their seats will be available to black youngsters who wish to take them. This pattern has worked exceedingly well at the new Ohrenberger School, and there has been a high degree of community support. In order for us to proceed with these plans, however, we must have the approval of the State Board of Education. I urge the State Board to act swiftly on our building requests in order to make these long-awaited new high schools a reality.

An even longer-awaited new school is the Secondary Education complex at Madison Park in Roxbury. Approximately \$2 million has been spent to date on the planning, design, and site improvement for this project, and yet basic decisions about the educational uses of this facility have not yet been made, and construction has not yet begun. Similarly, planning for a much needed Occupational Resource Center has been underway since well before I came into office, and yet no progress has been made, and thousands of youngsters graduate from Boston high schools each year unprepared to enter either the university or the work world. I am today proposing that the Madison Park site be used to house both an Occupational Resource Center and a Center for the Performing Arts. These facilities should be opened on a metropolitan basis, thus enabling surrounding communities to share in specialized programs that alone they might not be able to afford. There would be sufficient space in these facilities for some students to be enrolled there full time, while others come for six or eight weeks, but programs at these facilities would be closely tied to on-the-job experience in industries or art institutions, thus drawing upon the full richness of the City's business and cultural life.



The experience of the Trotter School demonstrates that if unique and exciting educational programs are offered at schools located in Roxbury, there will be no shortage of parents throughout the metropolitan area who will want the advantages of such programs for their children. We have conducted a preliminary study to determine the feasibility of using the Madison Park site for a combined Occupational and Performing Arts Center, and we are convinced it can be done. Once again, however, the approval of the State Board of Education is necessary before we can begin construction.

With legislative action on the three matters I have described, and State Board approval of our building program, a framework can be created within which a program to equalize opportunities and improve the quality of education for all Boston schoolchildren can be initiated. But new legislation and new buildings are only a beginning; the real problem is how to change what goes on inside the buildings. The Boston school system must be opened up to new methods, new approaches, new voices, new resources. Boston is an incredibly lively, energetic, bustling city, full of justly celebrated people, places, and institutions. Within a fifteen mile radius of the City lies the greatest concentration of academic, scientific, and artistic talent in the country, and yet the school system still remains closed off to this talent. I realize that some steps have been taken, especially through the Flexible Campus program, to enable students to capitalize on the educational resources of the entire city, but much remains to be done. My office has recently participated in the development of two major planning projects which, if funded, should substantially reduce the isolation of the schools from the rest of city life. The first project, the Secondary School Commission, will enable a broadly based group of leaders from the

universities, art institutions, business world, and city departments to work side by side with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in examining the current programs and facilities in the City's junior and senior high schools in order to develop a detailed master plan for the development of future buildings and programs. The second project will enable Boston parents and educators to meet with their counterparts throughout the metropolitan area to develop a systematic and comprehensive plan for ending the racial and economic isolation of Boston's minority students and for allowing suburban students to participate more fully in the cultural and scientific life of the city.

But these planning efforts, if funded, will have long term, not immediate, benefits to our City's students. What is needed is a plan to get immediate help to our schools. The citywide reading scores recently made public by Superintendent Leary's office indicate that schools in all parts of the City are in deep trouble. With each succeeding year in school, the majority of Boston students are falling further and further behind national norms. Although reading is not the only skill our schools should be teaching, it is probably the most critical one, for a student who can't read is denied full participation in the economic and political life of our society. The reading scores provide further evidence that the problems of the City's schools are not going to be solved by massive busing, for what is to be gained by moving students from one low-achieving school to another one? Almost all Boston schools, black and white alike, are disadvantaged, and action must be taken to improve them all.



Today I am calling upon all of the area's colleges and universities to pool their resources in order to develop a coordinated strategy for upgrading the quality of the Boston schools. The colleges all have some kind of teacher training or research program underway in the school system, but by and large their programs are designed to meet the college's needs rather than the school system's. What is needed now is an effort jointly undertaken by the leadership of the School Department and the colleges to define the School Department's most pressing priorities and then to shape the universities' programs and services to meet these priorities. Reading is one major area of need, but there are many others as well. Each college has its own areas of strength and specialization; working together, the colleges should be able to design a program which will affect every student in the city. One approach might be for each college or university to "adopt" a district high school and its feeder schools, thus targeting its efforts in a specific geographic area of the City. Again, I recognize that individual colleges have already initiated programs in some schools, but to date the effort has been sporadic and piecemeal. Efforts are already underway at the staff level to identify **the areas of** greatest need and to design a coordinated attack, and I will soon be convening a meeting of college and university presidents in order to seek their fullest cooperation. These colleges and universities receive substantial benefits and services from the city in their tax-exempt status, and it is only fair that they be asked in turn to focus services and benefits on the City's schoolchildren. I have already made it clear to the University of Massachusetts that I intend to evaluate their performance at Columbia Point largely in terms of how successful they are in attracting and serving Boston rather than suburban students. Although it is perhaps unrealistic to expect the City's private institutions to

reach out as much as UMass or Boston State, clearly much can be done to help improve the quality of preparation in Boston's high schools so that more graduates can take advantage of the vast opportunities for higher education here in the City.

But even if the Legislature, the State Board of Education, and the local colleges and universities do their part to provide equal access to quality education for all Boston students, in the final analysis no substantial improvement in the education of Boston school children can be made without doing something about the Boston School Committee. The historical reason for the creation of independent school committees has been to keep schools out of politics, but the Boston School Committee has injected politics into every aspect of the operation of the school system. The tragedy is that, by and large, the City's teachers are hard-working, dedicated professionals struggling against difficult odds. We may be asking too much of our schools to expect them to solve the multiple problems besetting urban America, for the schools by themselves cannot be expected to cure the effects of poverty, unemployment, bad housing, and all the other symptoms of social neglect.

In the eight months since he has become Superintendent, Dr. Leary and his staff have been struggling hard to bring some measure of accountability to the school system, and their efforts are beginning to show progress. But in the last analysis they are doomed to failure under the present structure, for the School Committee will not restrict its role to policy making and allow the professionals to administer the schools. Instead, the School Committee spends the great bulk of its time worrying about personnel matters, allowing the major questions of the goals and purposes of the school system to go unattended, and the Department to drift from one crisis to another.



Three years ago I appointed a Home Rule Commission to examine all aspects of city government in order to recommend whatever changes were necessary to provide increased efficiency and responsiveness in the delivery of services to the residents of Boston. After 18 months of careful study and deliberation, the Commission recommended a whole range of changes, some small, some major. Among the most controversial recommendations of the Commission was the abolition of an elected School Committee, to be replaced by a Commissioner of Education appointed by the Mayor. The primary rationale for this recommendation was that there was no compelling reason to treat the School Department any differently than any other major city department, and that a coordinated, efficient, effective city government required centralized planning and control over all major city departments -- police, fire, parks, hospitals, as well as schools. I believe that the recommendation of the Home Rule Commission makes sense, and should be implemented, and I will urge the City Council to examine the recommendation with great care. I realize, however, that others may be fearful of giving the Mayor direct responsibility for the schools and may prefer an expanded Committee with some mix of district and at-large representation, or some mix of elected and appointed members. There is no magic formula for improving the way the School Department is governed, but clearly some change in the present structure is needed in order to fix responsibility and accountability more clearly and to rebuild public confidence in our educational system. I hope the City Council will stimulate a full and careful public discussion of the various proposals that are before it for restructuring the School Committee, with an eye toward placing one or more reform plans on the Fall ballot for voter approval. A restructured School Committee will not guarantee

progress, but I believe it is the precondition for substantial change to occur.

Whatever change may take place at the top of the School system, it is equally critical that mechanisms be developed for increasing citizen participation at the school level. In the long run, changes will come in the Boston schools only when parents and taxpayers demand those changes, and when the local school administration must account to parents for the progress of their children. In the Community School program, currently in operation in eight schools, a model for citizen participation has been developed which seems to be working very effectively. In these schools, policies are set by an elected council consisting of representatives of all age groups in the neighborhood. This council prepares its own budget, and screens all candidates for staff positions. The program is administered centrally by the Public Facilities Department, but the role of the central administration is to provide support and resources to the local councils, not to tell the councils what to do. In the few short months since this program has been under city administration, there has been an enormous expansion of community participation and interest in these schools. In a typical week 18,000 people of all ages, pre-school through elderly, participate in programs in these schools. These schools have become true community centers, and have enabled people to take a new pride in their neighborhood.

Right now the Community School program exists only in eight new schools, and only affects what happens in those schools after 3 o'clock. But there is no reason why Community School Councils, with parent, teacher and student representation, could not function in all schools in the City, and no reason why all schools couldn't ultimately be kept open late afternoons, evenings and weekends as community centers.



In order to do this, however, the School Department would have to work much more closely with City Hall, for only through consolidation of the various programs now being offered by the Parks Department and other city agencies could a citywide Community School program be run economically and efficiently. Thus, the abolition or restructuring of the School Committee would allow for both more citizen participation at the grassroots level, and more centralized planning at City Hall, thereby resulting in more effective and productive expenditures of tax dollars.

The promise of the Community School Program is a good point on which to close, for the success of that program only highlights the damage that a massive forced busing program would do to the city. The point about such schools as the Marshall and the Holland is that they were deliberately built in neighborhoods that were in transition in the belief that a beautiful, new school with excellent recreational and cultural facilities could stabilize a neighborhood and persuade people of different races to learn to live and work together. These facilities, and others like them, have contributed to a revitalization of neighborhood life and have enabled people to develop a renewed sense of pride in their community. The strength of this city is in her neighborhoods, and any court order which weakens people's ties to the neighborhood by forcing children to go across town to school could undo all that has been accomplished in the neighborhoods these past six years.

I have suggested action that the Legislature and State Board of Education can take to make the concept of equal educational opportunity a reality for the children of Boston, and I will lobby hard to see that our bills get passed and that our new buildings get approved. I have



also suggested steps that the colleges, the City Council, and the voters can take to bring about an improvement in the educational quality of the city's schools, and I will work hard to see that these measures are taken as well. But even if all of the measures I have suggested are adopted, we will almost certainly be faced with a mandatory busing plan unless the School Committee acts decisively to remedy the complaints brought against it in the federal courts.

The School Committee is now doing everything in its power to find a scapegoat for its present problems, but the Committee members must bear the responsibility for the mess they have created. Had the School Committee committed itself in the early 60's to seeking equal educational opportunity for all children, there would have been no need for a Racial Imbalance Law. Once the law was passed, had the Committee moved firmly and swiftly to implement the law, integration might have been achieved with a minimum of community disruption. Instead, the School Committee adopted a posture of defiance and resistance to the law, and with each passing year they have made the possibility of peaceful desegregation more difficult and have increased the likelihood that a federal court will impose a desegregation order on Boston that will go far further than anything required under the Racial Imbalance Law.

At a time when a national administration has callously turned its back on the plight of the cities, it is doubly important that the School Committee not be allowed to divide the City from within. What is at stake is the viability of neighborhood life in Boston. The full heat of public pressure must be brought on the School Committee to force it to take whatever steps are necessary to head off a catastrophe of a massive busing order; for such an order would compound, not alleviate, the inequalities of educational opportunity found in this City.







